MARVEL®

PG 55 496

AVERY

STRACZYNSKI

ROMITA JR

HANNA

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN®

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Sheesh! Forget it. I wouldn't expect an old nerd like you to understand.

Old?!
I see you didn't argue with the nerd part.
Old?!

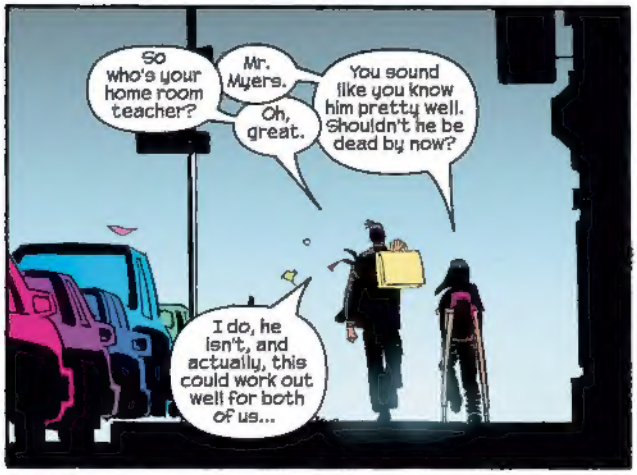
Look, unless you plan on taking me to the Vice Principal's office so he can give me detention or something, I can make it to class just fine alone.
You still haven't convinced me you're just late. What were you doing with those other guys anyway?

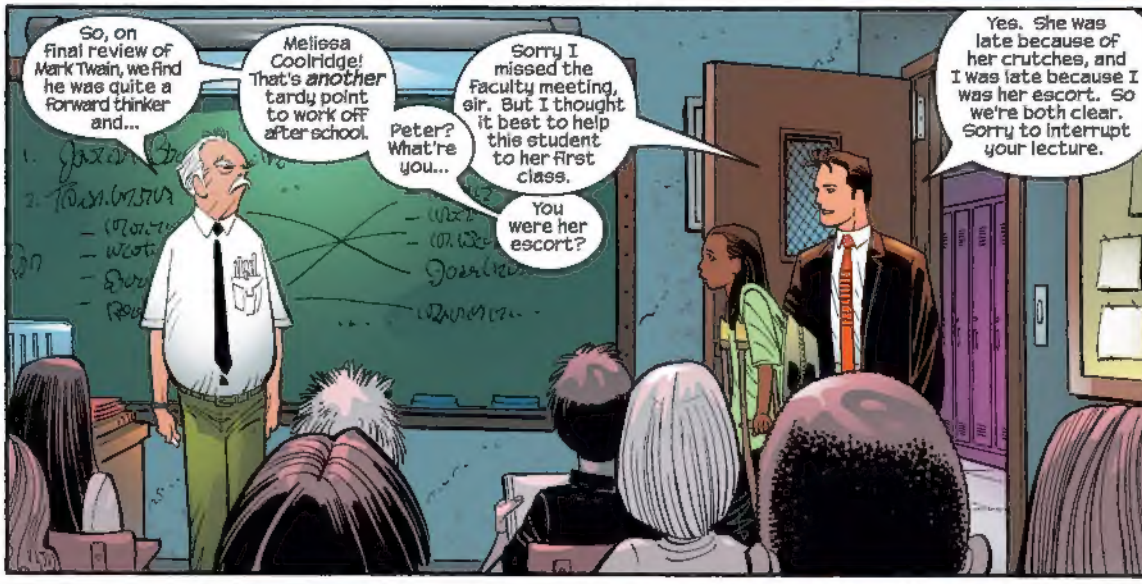
It's just hard getting around on these crutches, 'kay? I was getting some help but I hadda wait till they were done lighting up.

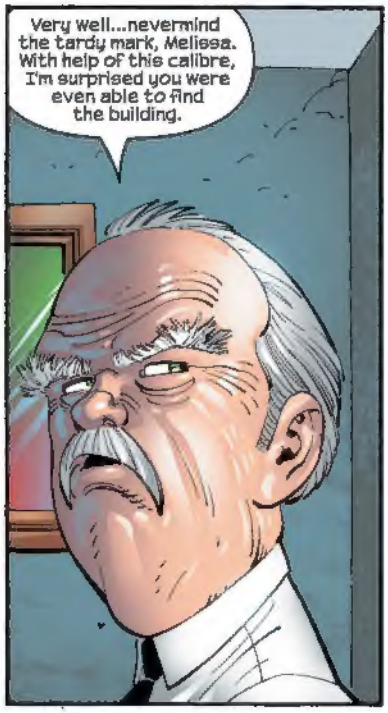
Why don't your parents give you a ride to school?
You're just gonna make me more late. I wish you'd have just busted me or something. Later.
Just a minute, young lady.

I have a name. Melissa. I'd rather you used it.

Okay, Melissa. I have an obligation as a teacher in this school to see you safely to class.
Fine, yeah, whatever.


So who's your home room teacher?
Mr. Myers.
Oh, great.
You sound like you know him pretty well. Shouldn't he be dead by now?
I do, he isn't, and actually, this could work out well for both of us...


So, on final review of Mark Twain, we find he was quite a forward thinker and...
Melissa Coolridge! That's *another* tardy point to work off after school.
Peter? What're you...
Sorry I missed the faculty meeting, sir. But I thought it best to help this student to her first class.
You were her escort?
Yes. She was late because of her crutches, and I was late because I was her escort. So we're both clear. Sorry to interrupt your lecture.


Very well...nevermind the tardy mark, Melissa. With help of this calibre, I'm surprised you were even able to find the building.

Laugh all you want, Myers, someday you're gonna have to use the men's room in a hurry, and I'm gonna get there before you.

And web the door shut.

Good afternoon, Maude. Looking beautiful as always.
Oh Peter, you lie beautifully, darling, have ever since the ninth grade, so don't stop.

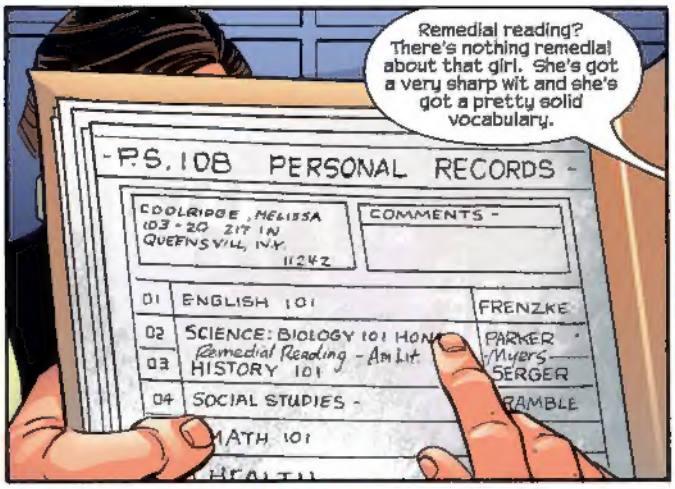
What can I do for you today?
I'd like to see the records for a Melissa Coolridge.

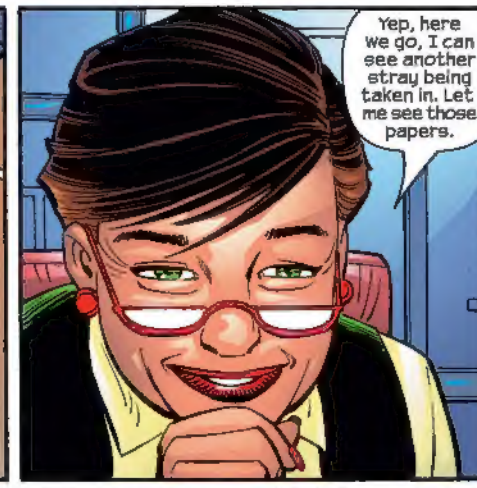
Let's see, here. Any particular reason for this one?
Just curious.

Not another one of your pet projects!
What's wrong with that?

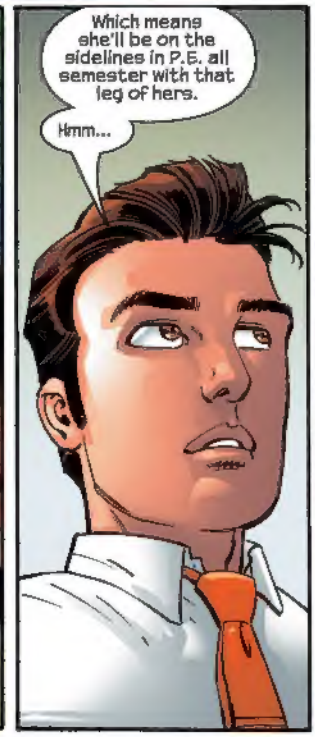
Nothing wrong. Just with all the extracurricular things you do for these kids, do you ever get to sleep?
I've learned something about sleep. You don't need much of it.

You sound like my grandfather. He said the same thing when he was ninety-seven.
I am not old!
I am not old!
I am not old!
And I'm not a nerd, either.
Just, y'know... in case.
Ah, here it is.

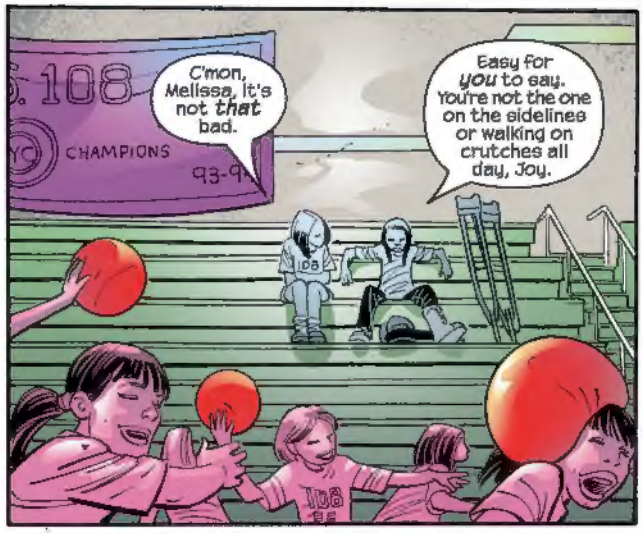

Remedial reading? There's nothing remedial about that girl. She's got a very sharp wit and she's got a pretty solid vocabulary.
-P.S. 108 PERSONAL RECORDS -
COOLRIDGE, MELISSA
103-20 ZIT IN
QUEENSVILL, N.Y.
11242
COMMENTS -
01 ENGLISH 101
FRENZKE
02 SCIENCE: BIOLOGY 101 HONS
PARKER
Remedial Reading - Am Lit
Myers
03 HISTORY 101
SERGER
04 SOCIAL STUDIES -
RAMBLE
MATH 101


Yep, here we go, I can see another stray being taken in. Let me see those papers.

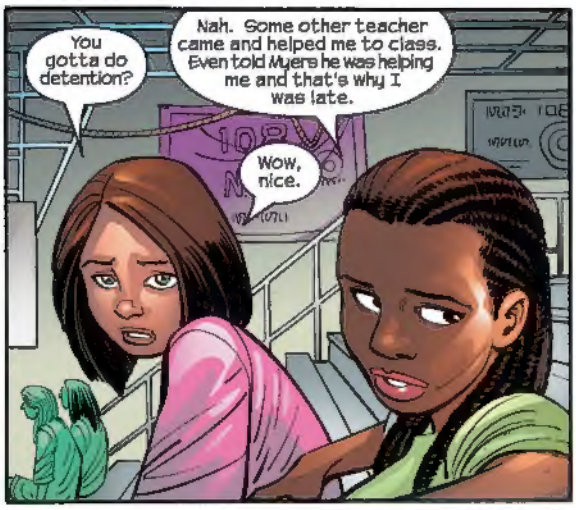
She failed her final exam in regular Lit last semester. So she's had to take the remedial to make up for it. Poor thing.
I remember her now. She was really upset about dropping the Honors Bio. She had to take an extra P.E. course just to keep her units up.

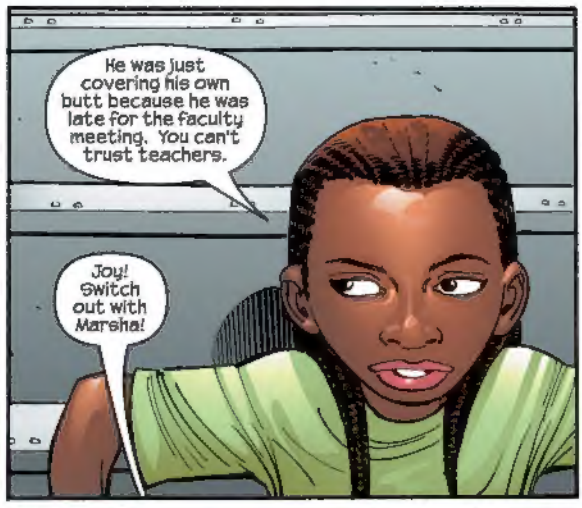

Which means she'll be on the sidelines in P.E. all semester with that leg of hers.
Hmm...

Thanks, Maude! I owe you.
Sure thing, Peter. Feel free to come by and lie to me anytime.
It'll make me nostalgic for my last two marriages...

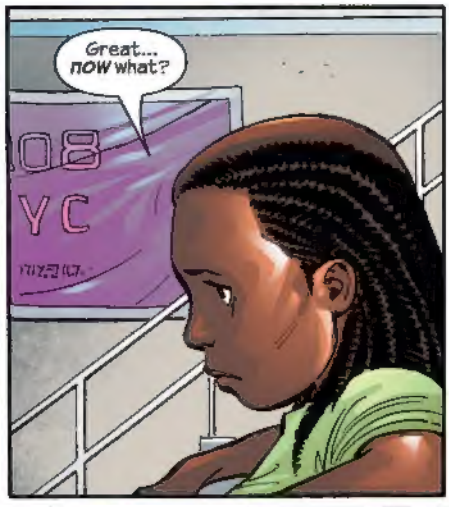

C'mon, Melissa, it's not *that* bad.
Easy for *you* to say. You're not the one on the sidelines or walking on crutches all day, Joy.
CHAMPIONS

I really don't wanna be here. Coulda skipped all day. Those idiots smoked too close to campus.
You got caught?
Mmm.


You gotta do detention?
Nah. Some other teacher came and helped me to class. Even told Myers he was helping me and that's why I was late.
Wow, nice.


He was just covering his own butt because he was late for the faculty meeting. You can't trust teachers.
Joy! Switch out with Marsha!

Melissa, you can go ahead and dress for class. But I wanna see you after the bell.
'Kay!
See ya, Mel.

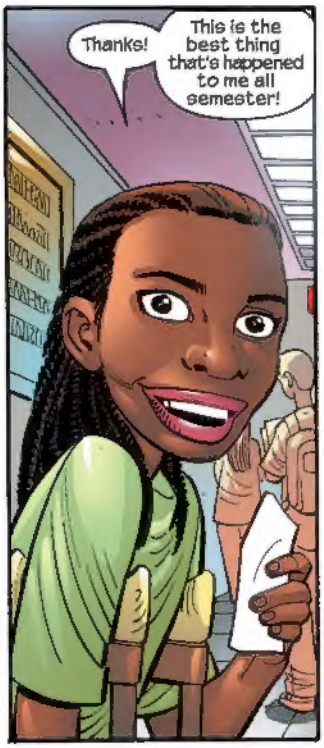

Great... *now* what?

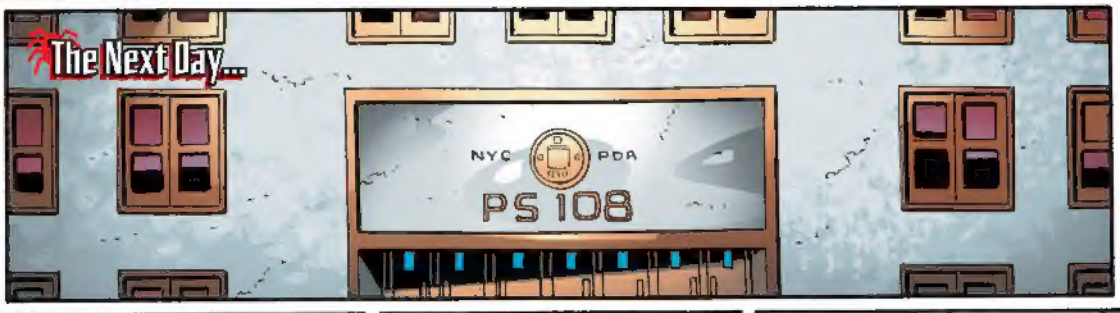
You realize that you're gonna be on the sidelines all semester.
Yeah, I know.
Good. Because you have an option, and you should be properly grateful.

I had a visit by Mr. Parker, who teaches Honors Bio this semester. He said he'd take you for the second half of the term if you wanna switch out.

Honors Bio?!? He really said that?
I think it's a good idea. Then, this summer, you can come back and train for basketball again.
All right! I'm *so* there!

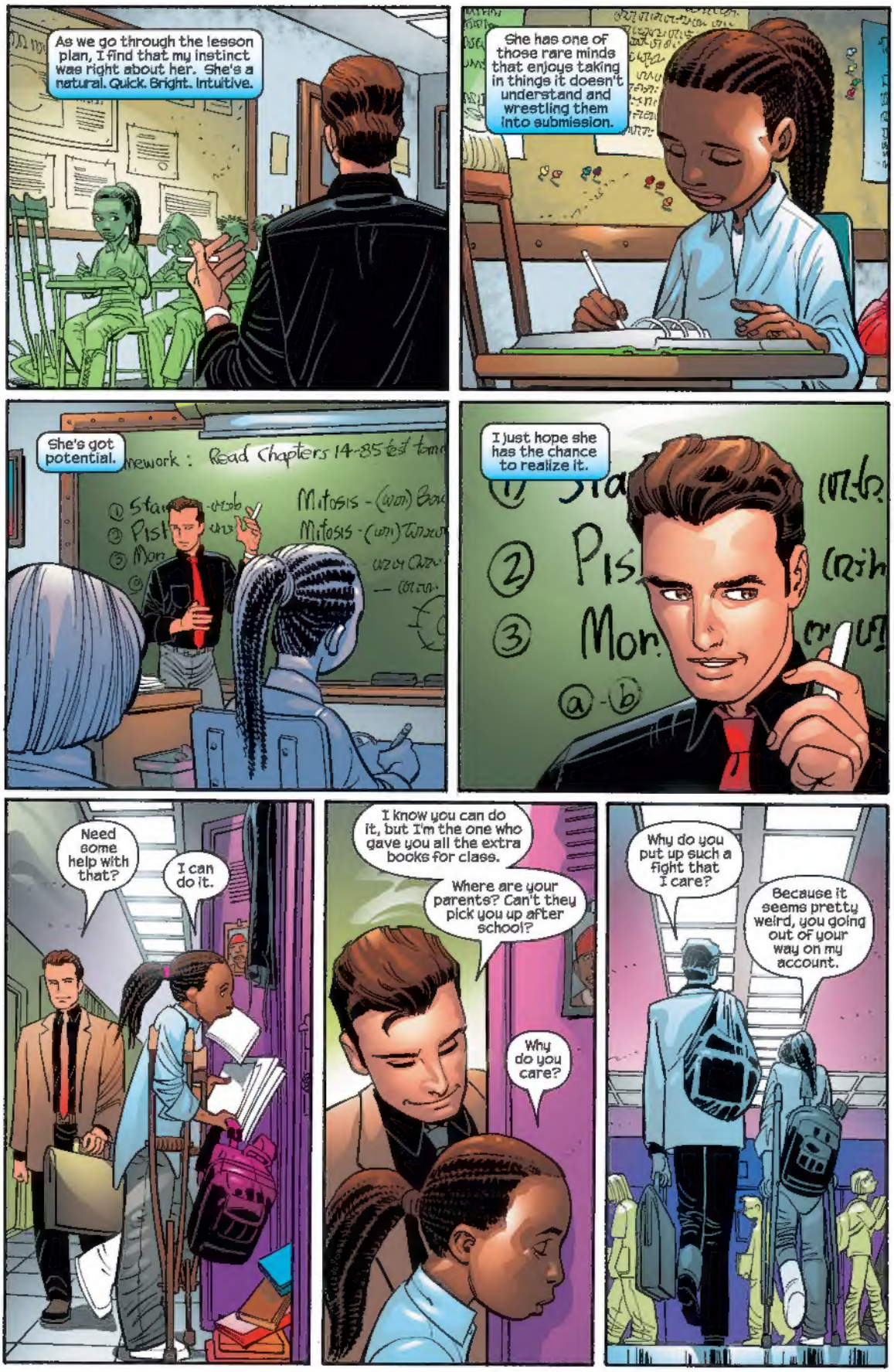
Give this form to Miss Stevens in the Guidance Office and report to Honors Bio tomorrow.


Thanks!
This is the best thing that's happened to me all semester!

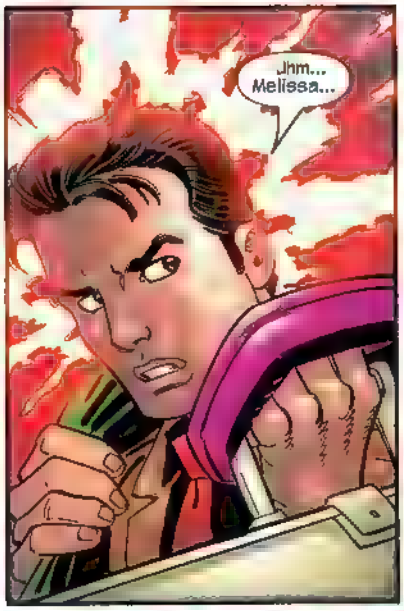

The Next Day...
NYC
PDA
PS 108

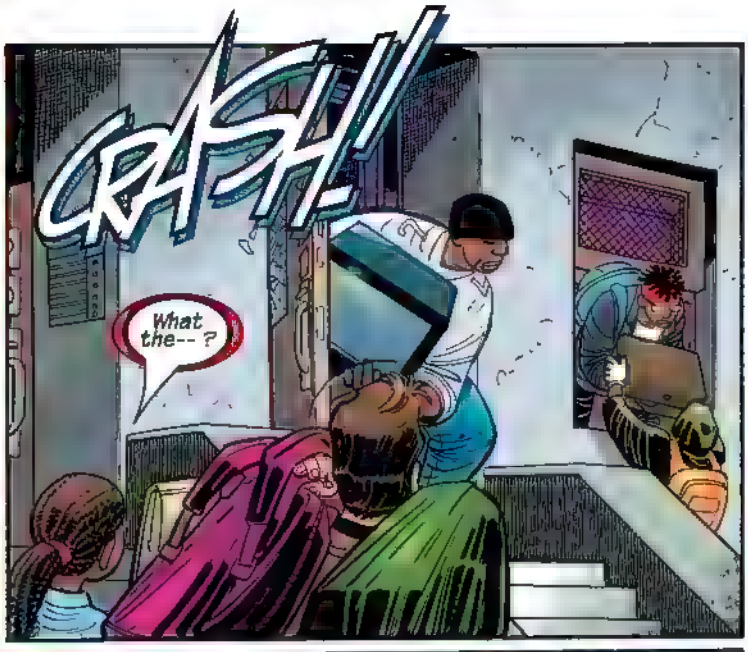
LAB 5
BIOLOGY

You again! I should've known this was all too good to be true!
Why don't you take the desk up front by the door? It's available.
BREEEEEEEEEEEEE


As we go through the lesson plan, I find that my instinct was right about her. She's a natural. Quick. Bright. Intuitive.
She has one of those rare minds that enjoys taking in things it doesn't understand and wrestling them into submission.
She's got potential.
I just hope she has the chance to realize it.
Need some help with that?
I can do it.
I know you can do it, but I'm the one who gave you all the extra books for class.
Where are your parents? Can't they pick you up after school?
Why do you care?
Why do you put up such a fight that I care?
Because it seems pretty weird, you going out of your way on my account.

And I think there's something weird about people who have to think there's something weird about people who are weird enough to pay attention to your situation and want to help out.
That's an awful lot of weirds in one sentence, yo.
Yeah...I think I blew out a neuron or two with that one.
Okay, then...
If you're really serious about this, then you can carry both my bags!
I do... but we still gotta walk slow.
Oof! Great... I hope you live close by...
Right...
One hour later.
Here we are! Home sweet home.
Let no one say you don't exert all effort in your studies...
It's good that I can still act the part of under-developed nerd after all these years. MJ would be proud of my acting skills.


Jhm... Melissa...


CRASH!
What the-- ?

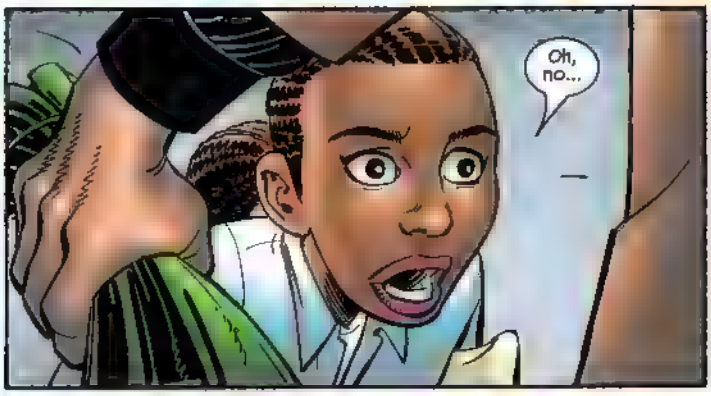
What am I gonna do? If it's a robbery, I can't whip out the webs here without causing a scene.
Hey! You can't do that!
Melissa-- stop!

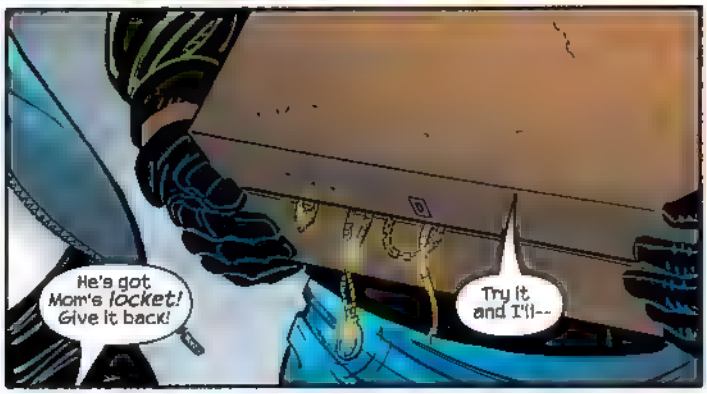
Check it! One of em's home!
I smell lunch money.

You want trouble? Bring it on.
Excuse me...
That so?

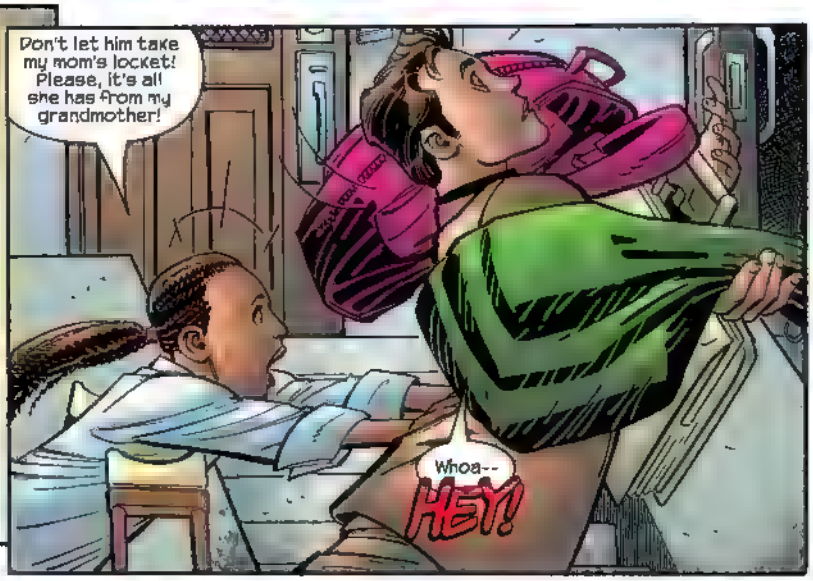
I'll have you know I have a cell phone, and I'm not afraid to use it.

This is how you plan on protecting me? You are a geek!
Nerd.
What EVER.


Oh, no...

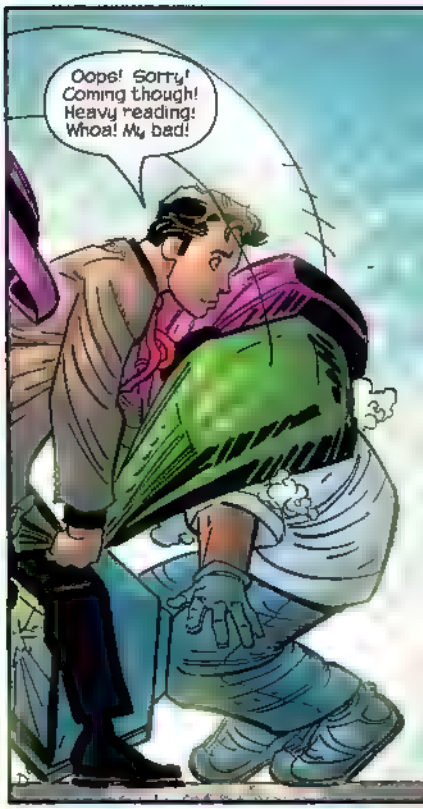

He's got Mom's locket! Give it back!
Try it and I'll--

Drop it. We weren't told to rough anyone up. Let's jet!

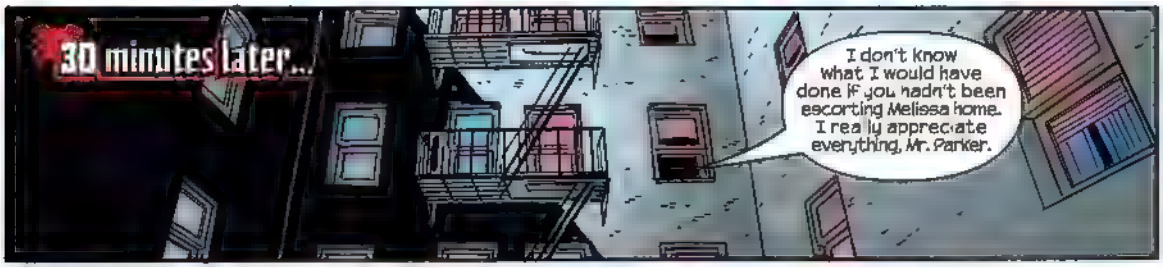

Don't let him take my mom's locket! Please, it's all she has from my grandmother!
Whoa--
HEY!

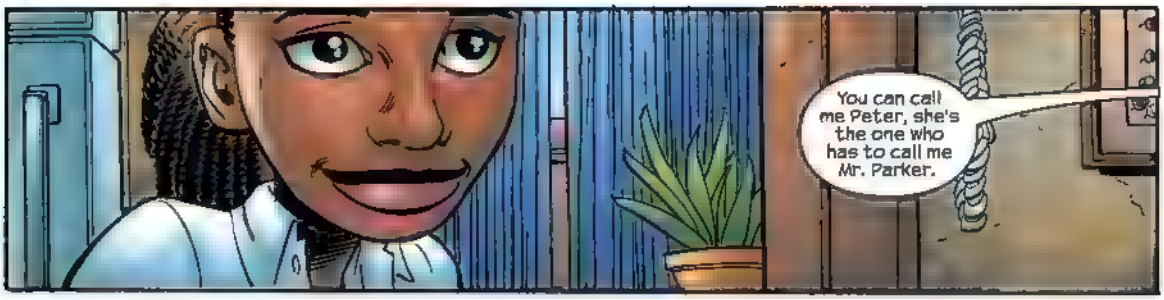
Oops! Ack!!

Damn, that girl's dangerous! But this works out perfectly.

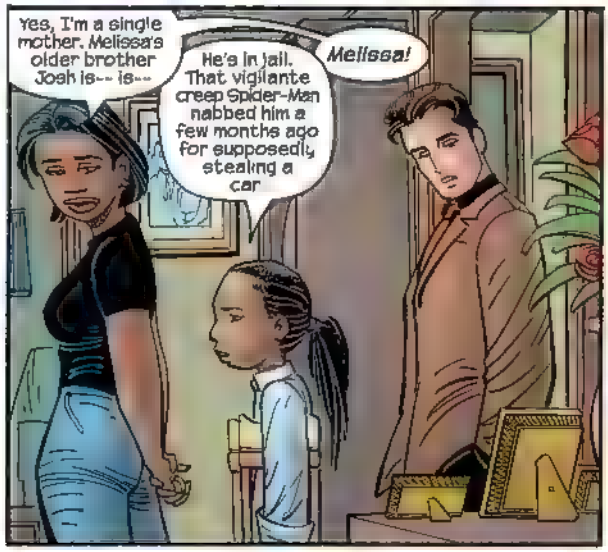

Oops! Sorry! Coming though! Heavy reading! Whoa! My bad!

Now can I call 9-1-1?

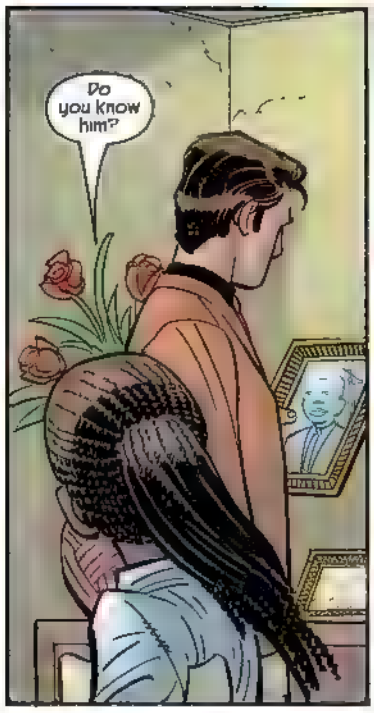

30 minutes later...
I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't been escorting Melissa home. I really appreciate everything, Mr. Parker.

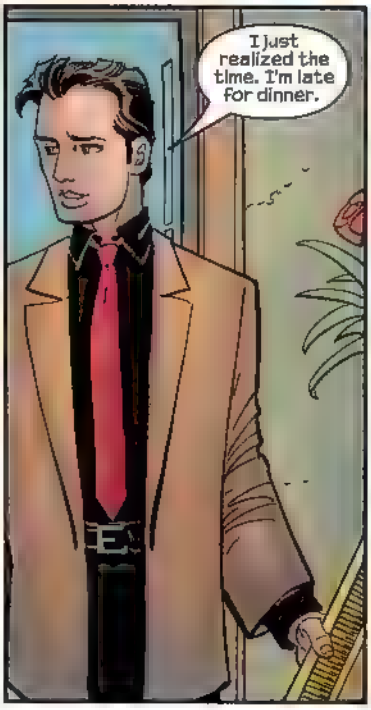

You can call me Peter, she's the one who has to call me Mr. Parker.

Oh how rude-- between the police report and the crutches, I haven't introduced myself. I'm Laura Coolridge.
It's a pleasure. Are you Melissa's only support right now? I noticed you were working late.

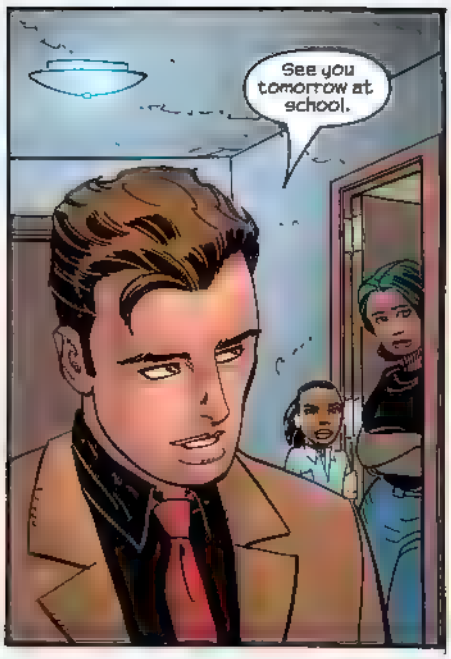

Yes, I'm a single mother. Melissa's older brother Josh is-- is--
He's in jail. That vigilante creep Spider-Man nabbed him a few months ago for supposedly stealing a car
Melissa!

Is this.. Josh?
Yes. His high school graduation photo.


Do you know him?


I just realized the time. I'm late for dinner.

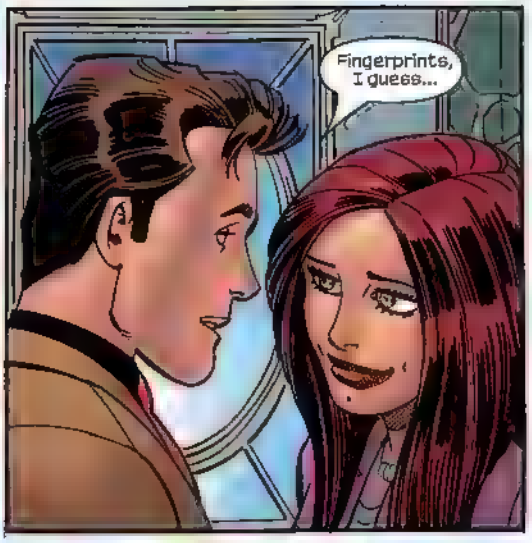
Oh, you're married?
She's waiting for me at our favorite spot. Glad you got home okay, Melissa

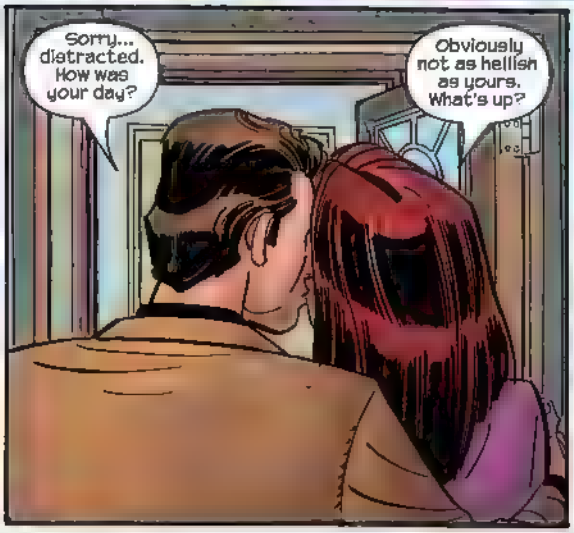

See you tomorrow at school.

Mel, come inside. It's dinner time.

He knows something about Josh, I know it.
Mel, come in and close the door! I'm not gonna pay to heat the neighborhood!

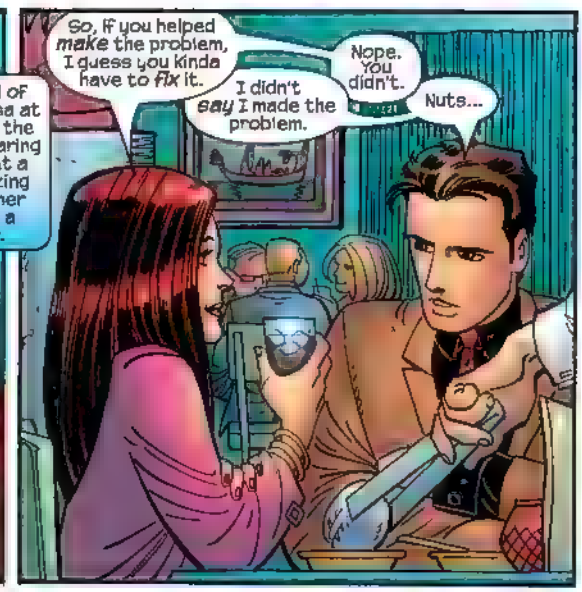
5 minutes later...
Hey, Tiger, you're actually on time! If you keep doing that, how am I going to know it's you?

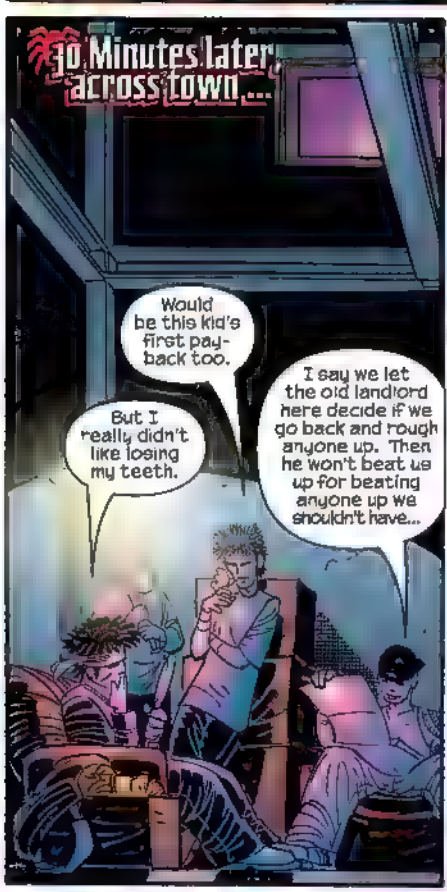

Fingerprints, I guess...

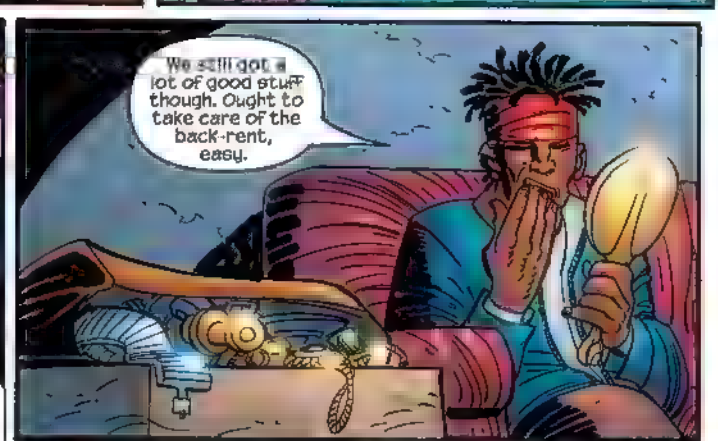

Sorry... distracted. How was your day?
Obviously not as hellish as yours. What's up?

I... I think I'll be working "late" tonight, MJ.
Oh? Something wrong? You look upset.

I tell her about it. All of it--from helping Melissa at school, to taking out the thugs at her home, hearing how her mom eked out a living, and then realizing I put her older brother away for carjacking a few months earlier.


So, if you helped make the problem, I guess you kinda have to fix it.
I didn't say I made the problem.
Nope. You didn't.
Nuts...


30 Minutes later across town...
Would be this kid's first pay-back too.
But I really didn't like losing my teeth.
I say we let the old landlord here decide if we go back and rough anyone up. Then he won't beat us up for beating anyone up we shouldn't have...


We still got a lot of good stuff though. Ought to take care of the back-rent, easy.

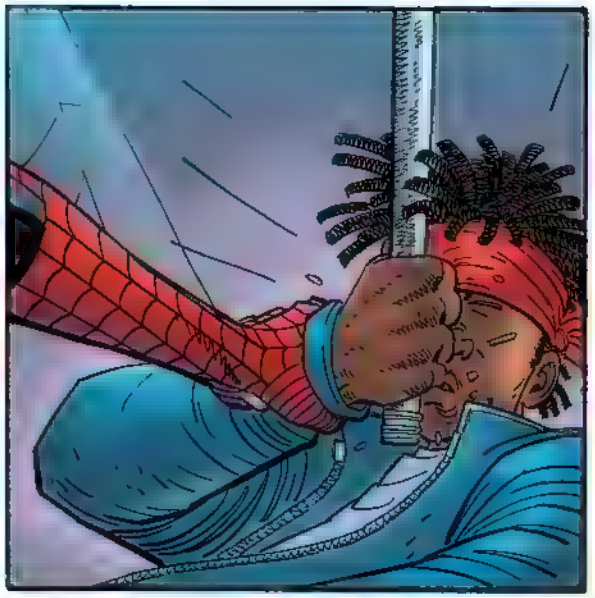
How was business today?
We, er-- it wasn't great, but we made your money back.

Where's Rudolpho? I wanna hear this out.
Went to pawn some of his stuff off.
So that being the case--

--anybody want to pay to buy this back?
Thweet Jethuth!
You guys ever think about looking behind you once in a while? Just, y'know, in case there's a friendly neighborhood Spider-Man following?
What have you guys done...? Did you lead him here?
I'd appreciate it if you didn't leave until I said what I came to say.
Ack!

Take care of him!
Great, now no one's gonna listen

I thought we could negotiate.



All I'm asking for is a quick audience.

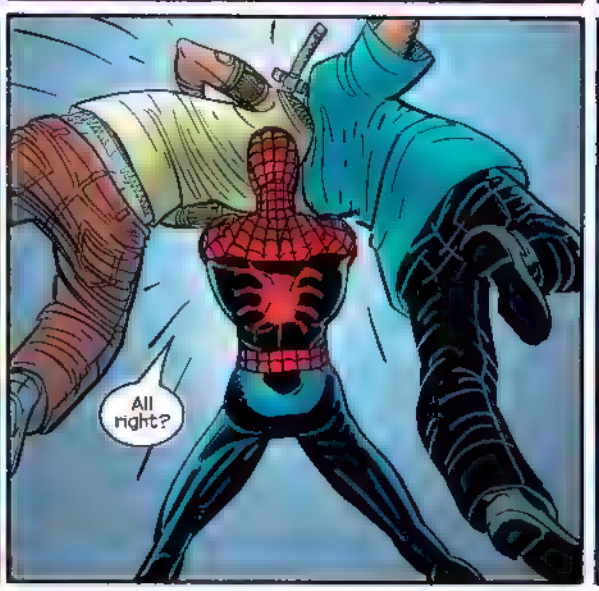
Are you hearing me?

Guess not.

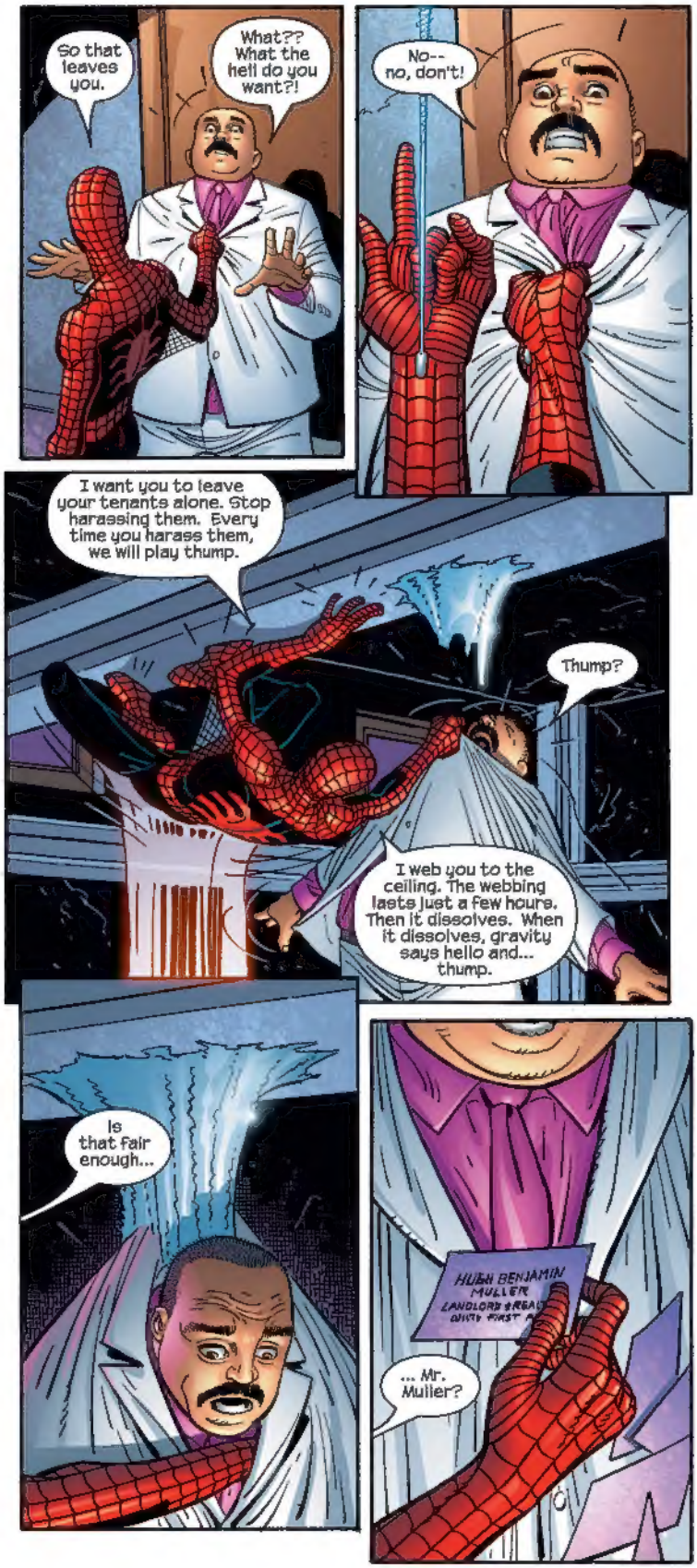
Look, all I'm saying is --

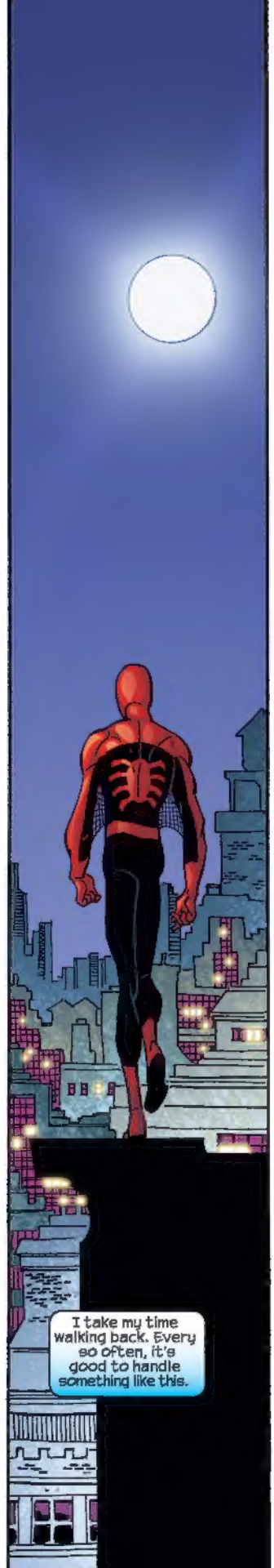
I won't come calling if you --

--if you don't go calling on people who can't defend themselves.


All right?

I knew no one was listening.


So that leaves you.
What?? What the hell do you want?!
No-- no, don't!
I want you to leave your tenants alone. Stop harassing them. Every time you harass them, we will play thump.
Thump?
I web you to the ceiling. The webbing lasts just a few hours. Then it dissolves. When it dissolves, gravity says hello and... thump.
Is that fair enough...
HUGH BENJAMIN MULLER
... Mr. Muller?


I take my time walking back. Every so often, it's good to handle something like this.

A clean case. Kid in trouble, mom in trouble, bad guys I can play thump with... no ambiguity. Except --
Except for that part about me jailing her brother.
You carry the weight of the world on your shoulders, Peter. It's too big a burden for anyone. Trust me on this one.
We haven't had time to chat in quite a long time, so I thought I'd drop by and see how you were doing. You don't exactly stick around.
Funny, Ezekiel. I thought you were the one who went off to Africa.
Which is nowhere near a subway station, I might add.
Obviously you haven't checked the latest maps. You'd be surprised what the government builds in the night when no one's looking.
So, you want to tell me what's got your brow furrowed?
It's... hard to explain.
You ever hear of the Doctrine of Unintended Consequences?
Try me.
I read a book once. That wasn't it.
Tell somebody you love them, or hit them, and you can't foresee all the possible consequences. You do "A" because it's a good thing. But "A" has consequence "B" which is a bad thing for somebody else.
Sometimes I focus so much on what I'm doing right now to fix something, that I forget even bad guys have families.

And if they're not around to take care of those families... what happens to them? Who looks after them?
Good question. I'll try to find a good answer.
Answer?

Ezekiel?

Just to make sure those guys got the right lesson, I swing by the area while I'm on patrol.

She's a dreamer. I'd hate for those dreams not to come true someday.

I don't know how to fix it. I don't know how to give her that future.
But that doesn't mean I'm going to stop trying.